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**Götter, Mythen, Philosophen: Lukian und die paganen Göttervorstellungen seiner Zeit by  
 Fabio Berdozzo (review)**

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## Götter, Mythen, Philosophen: Lukian und die paganen Göttervorstellungen seiner Zeit by Fabio Berdozzo (review)

Inger Neeltje Irene Kuin

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*Simile and Identity* is accessible to readers at all levels of expertise, including undergraduates, and would also make ideal reading for all people who like fiction and literary experiments.

ALESSANDRO BARCHIESI

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Fabio Berdozzo. *Götter, Mythen, Philosophen: Lukian und die paganen Göttervorstellungen seiner Zeit*. Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte, 106. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011. Pp. x, 332. \$165.00. ISBN 978-3-11-025459.

The only time the subject of Lucian and religion received extensive treatment was, until recently, by M. Caster, *Lucien at la pensée religieuse de son temps* (Paris 1938). Fortunately, this situation has now been remedied by Berdozzo's new book on the topic, a slightly edited version of his 2007 dissertation, which sets the reader up from the start for a major revision of Caster's view and methodology. Berdozzo, as he writes in his introduction, looks at the religious phenomena, broadly understood, as found in Lucian's oeuvre on their own merits, rather than, as Caster did, by comparing the historical religious life of the second century AD with Lucian's treatment of religion. Berdozzo announces that he will not be using any one theoretical framework in his study, although the close-reading approach and reader-response analysis, he writes, have aided his research. In the course of his book the author provides the reader with detailed, original, and insightful close readings of many of the major Lucianic texts on religion (some of which have received little critical treatment until now), and as such he has done a major service to all those interested in Lucian. Readers looking for new insights into Lucian's corpus as a whole, however, or the role of religion in Second Sophistic culture may come away disappointed.

Berdozzo has organized the study into four distinct parts: (i) Lucian's treatment of the traditional gods, (ii) his view of Platonic theology, (iii) his treatment of Stoic theology, and (iv) Lucian's religious attitude as compared with Galen's. The first part of the book, which is longer than the all the other parts combined, discusses the clearest examples of Lucian's religious satire (e.g., *Deorum Concilium*, *Juppiter Tragoedus*). Berdozzo rightly traces Lucian's treatment of the traditional gods back to the critical and creative attitude to myth taught in the rhetorical schools, and attributes to Lucian a skeptical and pessimistic outlook about the gods. Furthermore, Lucian's satire, by depicting the gods as lusty, power hungry, and unjust, would have scandalized audiences, just as, writes Berdozzo, satire directed at the prophet Mohammed has offended present-day audiences (50). I surmise that for many readers, and particularly for students of ancient religion, such a comparison goes too far, since it does not do justice to the variety of beliefs and narratives accommodated within ancient religion, Greek or Roman.

The chapters on Platonism and Stoicism, discussing such texts as *Nigrinus* and *Vitarum Auctio*, show Lucian's detailed engagement with philosophy. Berdozzo's conclusion, however, is negative: ultimately Lucian was not interested in the theology of these schools, because he preferred traditional religion as a

topic. The author states that he chose not to discuss Epicureanism because of a lack of material, but this seems like a missed opportunity: Epicurean theology is in fact quite present in a number of Lucianic texts (e.g., *De Luctu*, *Alexander*).

Berdozzo's last chapter offers an engaging discussion of Lucian's contemporary Galen. The author argues that an important difference between the two men is that Galen had spiritual fathers he admired (Plato, Hippocrates), while Lucian lacked such authority figures. And, whereas Galen discusses his private religious views at length, nothing of the sort can be found in Lucian. Berdozzo concludes that Lucian "with his religious satires denied others what he himself . . . had not experienced: an intimate and sincere religious sensibility" (279). Although this may perhaps be true, the author, in my view, insufficiently addresses the question of genre. Lucian's speeches and dialogues, unlike Galen's treatises, do not readily lend themselves to personal expressions of faith.

The book is well produced, and includes both an index locorum and an extensive general index, which even lists modern authors. The similarly extensive bibliography was unfortunately not updated in the editing process, and as a result the most recent items are from 2006. One would have liked to see Berdozzo address, for instance in his preface, recent contributions by Karavas<sup>1</sup> and Dickie<sup>2</sup> on the topic. The clear structure of the book and succinct chapter summaries are helpful for those wanting information about specific subtopics. All in all, Berdozzo's book is to be welcomed as an important first step in the much-needed revision of Caster's view, and hopefully will inspire further work on Lucian, his audience, and their gods.

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Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Herculaneum: Past and Future*. London: Frances Lincoln, 2011. Pp. 351. \$60.00. ISBN978-0-7112-3142-9.

Published in collaboration with the Packard Humanities Institute.

Herculaneum—the often forgotten cousin of Pompeii—is passed by train- and busloads of tourists alike, many of whom remain sadly ignorant that such a remarkable city exists. Unlike Pompeii, for which there is an abundance of well-written and well-illustrated literature, the last English-language introductory work on Herculaneum was Joseph Jay Diess's revised edition of *Herculaneum. Italy's Buried Treasure* in 1989, first published in 1966. Thus, *Herculaneum: Past and Present* by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, one of the leading English-speaking scholars of the Bay of Naples and the head of the Herculaneum Conservation Project, is a most welcome addition. The book more than fulfills its aim to provide an

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<sup>1</sup> O. Karavas, "La religiosité de Lucien," in A. Bartley, ed., *A Lucian for Our Times* (Newcastle upon Tyne 2009) 137-44.

<sup>2</sup> M. Dickie, "Lucian's Gods: Lucian's Understanding of the Divine," in J. N. Bremmer and A. Erskine, eds., *The Gods of Ancient Greece: Identities and Transformations* (Edinburgh 2010) 348-61.